

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2361,
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED
AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS
ACT, 2006

SPEECH OF

HON. DAVID SCOTT

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, as a strong supporter of our Nation's veterans, I support the additional \$1.5 billion provided in the FY 2006 Interior Appropriations bill that addresses the current shortfall in funding for veterans' health care. These funds are urgently needed to care for troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the heroes from former conflicts who rely upon the VA for their health care. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, currently, there are 24.8 million veterans of the U.S. armed services. They served their country in one of the military branches—Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard—or in one of many smaller groups that supported the military services, primarily during World War II.

Approximately 769,000 veterans live in Georgia serving in every major conflict and during peacetime. About a quarter of the nation's population, approximately 70 million people, are potentially eligible for VA benefits and services because they are veterans, family members or survivors of veterans. The benefits include: medical care, payments to compensate for disabilities suffered during military service, rehabilitation and employment assistance, pensions to low-income disabled veterans, guarantees on loans to help veterans buy homes, financial aid to help them attend school, burial in a national cemetery and special headstones or markers for their gravesites.

Slightly less than half of all Americans who ever served during wartime in our country's history are alive today, and nearly 80 percent of today's veterans served during a war or an official period of conflict. There are widows and children of veterans of the Civil War and the Indian War of the last century who still receive VA benefits. The largest group of veterans fought in World War II. Approximately 550,000 Georgia veterans served during wartime during either World War II, the Korean conflict, during the Vietnam era or during the Gulf War. These veterans deserve our support especially due to the extraordinary sacrifices and contributions that they have made so that peace and freedom could exist around the world.

I also encourage Congress to provide much needed additional funding for veterans' health care in FY 2006 so that the VA's resources are sufficient to meet the increased demand for its services from our Nation's veterans and their families. It is critical that at all times, but particularly during a time of war, the quality of care for veterans must be a clear and unmistakable priority. We must fulfill our commitment to those who helped build America's strength and security. Our veterans should not have to wait any longer for the benefits they deserve.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO STAFF SERGEANT CHRISTOPHER M. FALKEL

HON. THOMAS G. TANCREDO

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 6, 2005

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a fallen soldier from Highlands Ranch, SSG Christopher M. Falkel. Staff Sergeant Falkel died during combat operations in Deh Afghan, Afghanistan. He was just 22 years old.

Chris was a member of the elite Green Berets, and was affectionately known by his colleagues as "little brother." He was well known by his peers for his principle, toughness, patriotism, love of country and his bravery.

Staff Sergeant Falkel was a 2001 graduate of Thunder Ridge High School in Colorado. He enlisted that October with the goal of serving his country in the Special Forces. After completing courses in Arabic language and survival, evasion, resistance and escape he began Special Forces training in 2002.

Ultimately, Christopher was assigned to the 1st Special Warfare Training group, where he served his country with honor and distinction, earning—among other awards and medals—the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star.

Mr. Speaker, my deepest sympathies and heartfelt condolences go out to friends and family of Staff Sergeant Falkel.

Christopher served his country with bravery and distinction, fighting against the forces of tyranny and oppression. He will be missed by all who knew and loved him.

All Americans owe Christopher and his family a great debt of gratitude. We honor his service and his sacrifice.

CONGRATULATING MAGEE RIETER AUTOMOTIVE SYSTEMS OF BLOOMSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA ON BEING NAMED SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR TO GENERAL MOTORS FOR THE 13TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR

HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 6, 2005

Mr. KANJORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask you and my esteemed colleagues in the House of Representatives to pay tribute to Magee Rieter Automotive Systems of Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, on the occasion of their being named worldwide "Supplier of the Year" to General Motors for the 13th consecutive year.

Of GMs 30,000 suppliers, Magee Rieter Automotive Systems is the only company in North America to achieve this remarkable record, a fact that should make its nearly 800 employees exceedingly proud.

Magee Rieter is the leading supplier of carpets to General Motors in America. The company has been in business in Bloomsburg since 1889 and has been supplying General Motors for more than 90 years, first with hand draped tapestries for Fisher Body carriages and, today, with fully molded carpet floors and integrated acoustical systems.

For more than a century, the company has endured and overcome numerous challenges including floods, fires and the rapidly changing business environment. After World War II, the company received the Army/Navy "E" award for excellence in recognition of its production of high quality materials for the war effort.

Magee Rieter records annual sales in excess of \$175 million and has an annual payroll of more than \$37 million that provides its employees with family sustaining incomes that average about \$39,000 annually. Overall, Magee Rieter is responsible for a \$168 million annual impact to the local economy.

The current employees of Magee Rieter are carrying on traditions of pride and success handed down by their parents, grandparents and great grandparents who worked at this remarkable company.

Under the leadership of president and chief executive officer Mike Katerman, Magee Rieter continues to be a cornerstone of the Bloomsburg community.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating Magee Rieter for demonstrating superior performance and for serving as a shining example for other businesses to emulate.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE WHITE LAKE TOWNSHIP LIBRARY ON ITS 30TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. THADDEUS G. McCOTTER

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 6, 2005

Mr. McCOTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and honor the White Lake Township Library, which is celebrating 30 years of service to the White Lake, MI, community.

On April 5, 1975, a resolution was adopted at the Annual Meeting of the Electors of White Lake Township, establishing "a free public library in accordance with Act 164, P.A. 1877." The six-member Provisional Library Board was appointed on May 20, 1975 and the first permanent board was named shortly after. The Library Board is composed of non-partisan elected officials who serve 4-year terms.

Library service was originally provided through a contract with the Waterford Township library. In 1980, White Lake Township's voters provided permanent support for the library by approving a perpetual operating millage of 0.3 mills in property taxes. In 1998, voters approved 0.5 mills for 8 years to add, maintain and improve library service.

The library has been housed in several locations around the township including the White Lake Community Hall and Brooks School. The core of the current building was built in 1984–1985, using local funds and a Library Services and Construction Act grant. The library was extensively remodeled and expanded in 2001 and now contains approximately 10,000 square feet and over 50,000 library items. Use figures have doubled in 5 years as the number of registered borrowers has grown to over 10,000 individuals. Long-range plans call for additional library space and expanded print, electronic and staff resources to meet the information and cultural needs of a rapidly growing township.

Mr. Speaker, for over 30 years the citizens of White Lake Township, MI, have continued